

The Party's Viewpoint on Practicing Grassroots Democracy - Some Lessons Learned in the Current Context

Nguyen Duc Quyen

¹ Ho Chi Minh Cadre Academy, Email: n.dquyen@hcmca.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

In the process of leading the country's innovation, our Party has strongly affirmed: Democracy is not only a goal, but also a driving force for the country's development; it is necessary to build and gradually perfect socialist democracy, ensuring that democracy is practiced in real life at all levels, in all sectors, in all fields. The article summarizes the basic viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam on practicing democracy in all areas of social life, thereby drawing lessons to promote the practice of democracy into reality.

Keywords: Viewpoint; democracy; base; leadership; Communist Party of Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

From practical requirements, at the 3rd Central Conference of the 8th tenure, the Party determined the need to "Strive to improve, constantly perfect, and enhance the effectiveness of representative democracy forms, and pay special attention to researching, testing, and applying appropriate and effective forms of direct democracy at the grassroots level." On February 18, 1998, the Politburo issued Directive No. 30-CT/TW on building and implementing the Grassroots Democracy Regulations, affirming the viewpoint of building and promoting the people's mastery, creating a strong driving force to promote the cause of national construction and defense. This was the first time the Party issued a separate document to lead and direct the implementation of democracy at the grassroots level, marking a new step forward in the awareness of democracy and the practice of socialist democracy. Then, on March 28, 2002, the Secretariat issued Directive No. 10-CT/TW on continuing to promote the development and implementation of the Grassroots Democracy Charter; and on January 7, 2016, the Politburo (12th tenure) issued Conclusion No. 120-KL/TW on continuing to promote, improve the quality and effectiveness of the development and implementation of the Grassroots Democracy Charter.

2. THE PARTY'S VIEWPOINT ON DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

Practicing democracy is the comprehensive application of ideas, viewpoints and the realization of the legal democratic status of the people in all areas of social life. This is done through the system of norms of the Constitution and laws, concretized by mechanisms, policies, regulations and principles to ensure that all people exercise their right to mastery. After more than 35 years of implementing the renovation policy, the Party's awareness of democracy and democratic practice has become increasingly specific and profound, with the goal of building a substantive, comprehensive democracy, originating from and for the people. The people's right to mastery is demonstrated in all areas: politics, economy, culture and society.

* *Implementing democracy in the political field*, during the renovation period, our Party advocates building socialist democracy in Vietnam, which not only reflects the universal democratic values of humanity but also reflects the cultural characteristics and traditions of the Vietnamese nation. Practicing democracy within the Party and in the political system, ensuring that all power belongs to the people. The core content is to respect and ensure human rights and civil rights, combined with the responsibilities and obligations of citizens in building the Party and the socialist rule-of-law State.

In which the people's power is promoted in political life. This includes fundamental rights such as civil rights, human rights, equality before the law; the right to vote and stand for election to the National Assembly and other state agencies; the right to freedom of speech and the right to participate in political organizations, all based on the Constitution and the law.

Based on the Party's viewpoint, the State has concretized the people's mastery through resolutions, policies and laws such as: Ordinance on implementing democracy in communes, wards and towns (issued in 2007); Decree No. 04/2015/ND-

CP, dated January 9, 2015 of the Government on implementing democracy in the activities of state administrative agencies and public service units; and Decree No. 149/2018/ND-CP on implementing the grassroots democracy regulations at the workplace. In addition, there are regulations on spokespersons of state agencies, the press and people's right to access information, the right to complain and denounce, as well as the people's right to follow a religion or not follow a religion. These regulations clearly demonstrate the Party's viewpoint on expanding and realizing the people's mastery.

Therefore, democracy in the political field has created favorable conditions for people to exercise their freedom, democracy, civil rights and human rights. At the same time, these regulations also clearly define the authority and responsibility of organizations and agencies in ensuring people's rights, affirming that people have the right to do what is not prohibited by law.

**Practicing democracy in the economic field*

Practicing democracy in the economic field is an important aspect, demonstrating that economic power is in the hands of the people and is aimed at serving the interests of the people. Democratic rights in this field are guaranteed by the Constitution and laws, and are enforced through state institutions, becoming principles of conduct in economic life. Economic democracy in our country is demonstrated by the fact that every citizen has the right to own production resources, based on their economic level and capacity, recognized and protected by law. Citizens are the owners of the resources they participate in a specific form of production and business organization in each economic sector. People have the right to own, the right to use and the right to benefit from the economic results of what they own.

During the transition period to socialism in Vietnam, the economy was mainly small-scale production, with many different forms of ownership of means of production and uneven development among regions. In that context, our Party determined that "The multi-sector economic policy has long-term strategic significance, is a law from small-scale production to socialism and demonstrates the spirit of economic democracy, ensuring that everyone is free to do business according to the law." This is a new step forward in the Party's perception of democracy in the economic field, focusing on respecting the people's right to own production resources and ensuring that they are free to do business according to the law, and to choose their own forms of production and business organization.

Summarizing the practice of innovation, the 12th National Party Congress affirmed: "These valuable guiding perceptions need to be further concretized in accordance with each stage of development in the transition period to socialism." The 13th National Party Congress further clarified the role and position of each economic sector. In a multi-sector economy, the state economy plays a leading role; the collective economy and the cooperative economy are constantly consolidated and developed; the private economy is an important driving force; the economy with foreign investment capital is encouraged to develop in accordance with the strategy, planning and socio-economic development plan. The Party's policy on developing a multi-sector economy that complies with the law and is a component part of a socialist-oriented market economy, operating in many different forms of production and business organization, is the basis for innovation and building a democratic economic mechanism in Vietnam.

Democracy in the economy is also reflected in the autonomy of citizens in economic activities. Citizens have the right to choose the form of production and business organization such as private, collective, or joint stock company. They have the right to do business in industries and professions that are not prohibited by law. To exercise this autonomy, the 13th Congress affirmed: The State builds and perfects institutions, protects property rights, business rights, creates a favorable, public, and transparent environment for enterprises, social organizations, and markets to operate.

People have the right to benefit from the results of economic activities. Every citizen has the right to enjoy the fruits of his or her economic activities. In a market economy, the distribution of these fruits is the distribution of income. Citizens have the right to contribute to development policies and strategies and to monitor economic activities of the State. They have the right to participate in the formulation of economic development policies and strategies, the creation of macroeconomic instruments of the State and are obliged to implement them; at the same time, they have the right to inspect and monitor economic activities of the State.

In the process of leading the country's construction and development, the Communist Party of Vietnam has constantly raised awareness and innovated thinking about culture, issued specialized resolutions to guide the implementation of democracy in the cultural field. Typical resolutions include: Resolution 5 of the Central Committee, Session VIII on building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity (1998); Resolution No. 23-

NQ/TW of the Politburo, Session X on continuing to build and develop literature and art in the new period (2008); and Resolution 9 of the Central Committee, Session XI on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development (2014), based on the summary of 15 years of implementing Resolution 5 of the Central Committee, Session VIII on culture (1998-2013 period).

From a systemic perspective, the cultural field in social life includes activities such as cultural creation and production; cultural dissemination, exchange, and dissemination; cultural reception and enjoyment; and activities to preserve and promote cultural heritage. Therefore, the main content of implementing democracy in the cultural field is expressed through the following aspects:

Firstly, democracy in cultural creation and production through the freedom to create and organize the production of cultural products by individuals and organizations in society.

Second, democracy in cultural communication, exchange and dissemination is the right to publish, circulate, buy and sell cultural products and organize cultural activities.

Third, democracy in receiving and enjoying culture means that people can participate in community cultural activities and enjoy cultural products.

Fourth, democracy in exploiting and preserving national cultural heritage is the right to participate in protecting and preserving relics, customs, practices, and traditional lifestyles.

* *Practicing democracy in the social field* is the process of expanding the active participation of the people in solving social problems. With the spirit of putting people and people's happiness first, our Party pays special attention to practicing democracy through social policies. Policies on education, health care, and social security... are implemented in the direction of democratization, aiming to promote the people's democratic rights in all fields.

Through the Congresses, the viewpoint on democracy in the social field has gradually taken shape and become increasingly clearly affirmed, concretized in the Constitution and laws, linked to civil rights and human rights, and gradually implemented in practice.

3. PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED TO PUT DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE INTO PRACTICE

3.1. Advantages in practicing democracy

In the process of implementing the renovation policy, Vietnam has actively promoted the practice of socialist democracy and achieved many important advances. The people's democratic awareness and ability to practice democracy have been significantly enhanced. Many policies and measures to promote the active and proactive role of the people have been effectively implemented. The system for implementing the people's mastery rights has been gradually established, concretized and put into practice.

In the political field, democracy within the Party, within state organizations, and socio-political organizations has been expanded and brought into play with positive effects. The political system has been innovated in the direction of streamlining, effectiveness, and efficiency; democratization, openness, and transparency in its methods of operation. The development of socialist democracy is a measure of the maturity of socialism in Vietnam, of which the highest and most concentrated expression is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, ruled by law, of the people, by the people, and for the people. The State, on behalf of the people, holds the right to manage and operate the economy, society, and culture on a macro level.

Thereby, socialist democracy is further ensured to develop firmly and continuously improve. The people's mastery is increasingly expanded and clearly defined in legal documents. The people's role in social supervision and criticism is promoted. Timely and effectively fight against distorted, incorrect, and hostile arguments on the issue of democracy and human rights in Vietnam.

In the economic field, the democratization process is increasingly expanded. Diversification of ownership forms, economic sectors and types of enterprises is encouraged to develop. Fair distribution is carried out based on labor results and economic efficiency, as well as on the level of capital contribution and other resources, along with distribution through the social security and social welfare system.

In the cultural field, policies, guidelines and strategies on ensuring cultural rights, especially the right to freedom of creation and cultural activities, as well as the right to equality in enjoying cultural achievements, are increasingly supplemented and improved.

On the social front, democratic practice has become increasingly comprehensive and profound. Citizens' rights and human rights are promoted, respected and protected by law. Social policies are effectively implemented in the spirit of socialization. The system of institutions and structures ensures political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights; the rights of disadvantaged groups and people with beliefs and religions have been firmly established. The work of propaganda, education and research on human rights has made positive developments, along with the promotion of international cooperation in this field.

2.2. Some limitations

The 13th National Party Congress recognized that, in addition to achievements, there are still some issues that need to be improved in the implementation of democracy. Some grassroots organizations of the Party and some individuals in the ranks of Party members, civil servants and public employees have not yet demonstrated an exemplary spirit, nor have they set a high level of respect for the opinions and recommendations of the people. In addition, the settlement of the legitimate rights and interests of the people has not always been implemented properly and promptly. In some cases, the people's right to mastery is still violated, and there are still signs of formal democracy, which is not fully guaranteed by discipline and law.

In the political field, the implementation of the Party's guiding viewpoint on democracy has not yet reached the necessary level in some localities, and is still formalistic. Although the decisive and dominant role of democracy within the Party in the political and social systems is undeniable, there are still cases where it has not really promoted the development of democracy in society. The principle of "collective leadership, individual responsibility" often encounters a state of formality rather than substance in some places. The delay in translating the Party's policies into laws and regulations has also caused many difficulties for Vietnam's legal system, leading to inconsistency and instability, affecting the process of implementing democracy in society and law enforcement. In order to promote the principle of power belonging to the people and to exercise people's mastery widely and substantially, these limitations need to be overcome promptly and carefully.

In the economic field, the innovation of the Party's leadership and the State's management methods has not yet fully met the requirements of economic innovation. Some projects and works, when implemented and constructed, have not received consensus from the people, leading to large losses and waste of capital. There are still problems of lack of transparency in resolving the relationship between the State and the people regarding land ownership and use rights. Equality between economic sectors, especially in licensing and business registration for private economic owners, still has many complicated and time-consuming procedures.

On the social front, people's right to supervise the process of building and implementing social security policies is still limited. Management is not deep enough in implementing social security policies, opening up opportunities for negative phenomena and corruption. Some social security programs are still not fully and unevenly covered nationwide.

In the cultural field, there has been a phenomenon of taking advantage of freedom of thought and freedom of creativity to use social networks to criticize the leadership of the Party, the State and the social regime. Some creative activities still exist in the form of "unruly democracy", do not comply with the law, disregard traditional cultural values, and focus on imitating Western styles, causing disgust and resentment in the community. In the field of production organization, many violations of copyright and intellectual property have occurred.

In addition, there are large imbalances and disparities in access to and enjoyment of culture between ethnic minorities and people in other regions, such as the delta and urban areas. Regulations on penalties for cultural violations are often not strict enough and do not have a deterrent effect, such as in licensing for performances, art performances, music, fashion, beauty contests, and models.

3.3. Lessons from practical experience

First, to promote the implementation of democracy in practice, it is necessary to continue to perfect the Democratic Charter to suit each type of establishment. The most important and urgent issue at present is to strengthen the people's mastery at the grassroots level, where all policies and decisions of the Party and State are directly implemented. This is

where it is necessary to promote the people's democratic rights in the most direct and extensive way. To do this, it is necessary to develop separate Democratic Charters for each type of establishment such as communes, wards, enterprises, hospitals, schools, research institutes, administrative agencies, and other establishments, in accordance with the specific characteristics of each type.

Second, it is necessary to perfect the operating mechanism of the political system to enhance the implementation of people's mastery.

The operating mechanism of the political system in Vietnam is determined by the leadership of the Party, the management of the State, and the participation of the People.

To ensure the effectiveness of this mechanism, it is necessary to grasp and handle the relationship between the factors in it, with the supremacy of the law being considered very important. The Party, with its decisive role in all successes of the Vietnamese revolution, must implement internal democracy, which is the foundation for implementing democracy in society. The State, under the leadership of the law, needs to protect the rights, obligations and responsibilities of all members of society, ensuring that the people's democratic rights are seriously implemented. The democratic mechanism of socialism lies in the nature of this regime, in which the People are the masters through representative and direct agencies, through the mechanism of "people know, people discuss, people do, people inspect, supervise and people benefit".

Third, it is necessary to strengthen the promotion of representative democracy and expand the scope of direct democracy, especially at the grassroots level.

To properly and effectively implement direct and representative forms of democracy, especially at the grassroots level as resolved at the 13th National Congress, it is necessary to carry out in-depth work at the grassroots level. This includes enhancing dialogue and direct contact with the community, listening to and promptly resolving the legitimate and just aspirations of the people. The development of democracy at the grassroots level also needs to be closely combined with the promotion of patriotic movements and volunteer activities, while promoting the building and dissemination of good models and methods in implementing democracy at the grassroots level.

Fourth, it is necessary to continue to raise awareness and capacity to practice democracy among cadres, party members and people.

Each individual's capacity to practice democracy includes many aspects, including knowledge, skills and attitudes towards democracy and the practice of democracy in the Party and in society. Knowledge of democracy is formed on the basis of general knowledge and understanding of the Party, its regulations, resolutions and statutes. Democratic practice skills are developed through practical experience and learning from real-life situations. Attitudes towards democracy depend on many factors, including cognitive capacity, viewpoints and ethics, responsibility and working style.

Raising awareness of democracy is important to promote the practice of democracy in everyday life, bringing about deeper, broader and more comprehensive understanding.

4. CONCLUSION

Since its founding, the Communist Party of Vietnam, founded and trained by President Ho Chi Minh, has always considered focusing on democracy as the basic principle of the organization. This is the principle that guides the entire organization and operation of the Party, ensuring unity of will and action, while promoting the development of democracy within the Party, creating great strength for the Party. President Ho Chi Minh and the Party have always affirmed that focusing on democracy is the basic principle in the organization and operation of the Party; rejecting this principle means rejecting the nature of the Party.

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